**John By Jeremy Slaven**

“Wake up John!” John’s dad yelled.

“I can’t believe I have football practice,” John muttered as he lazily rolled out of bed.

Standing there for a moment looking around his small room was like being in a store with nothing but sports posters. He looked to his left and saw his flat screen television next to his laptop. Looking to his right he saw himself in the mirror. He was small for his age, but he had blue eyes, brown hair, and he was pretty thin.

Finally, John got moving and walked to his door dragging his feet and moaning like a zombie. He still wasn’t yet awake, but he still got dressed into his purple and white practice jersey. Being fifteen meant that he played for the high school team. He ran outside and got on his bike and started pedaling furiously away.

There is nothing more John loved to do then pedal through his neighborhood. He loved pretty every sport he played except football. He never wanted to play football, but it runs in the family. His whole dad’s side of the family played football. When it was time for signups he signed John up for football. John pleaded his dad over and over again to sign him up for soccer, but he just laughed at John and said that soccer was for foot ferries.

“Good morning John.” John’s neighbor yelled to him over his lawn mower.

“Good morning Mr. Powers,” John yelled back as he pedaled away.

He was about two minutes from the middle school fields but instead of making a right to go to the school he made a left. Pedaling furiously to the fields trying not to be spotted by any of his football friends was part of his everyday life when he had football. John saw the empty parking lot and slowed down so he could turn into it.

Grinning as he got of his bike he ran to his best friend Austin and sang out, “Let’s go play some soccer!”

Since John’s Dad didn’t let him play soccer he decided to skip football practice every Saturday to go play soccer with Austin. He was his age, standing at almost six feet tall with brown eyes, and short brown hair. Everybody made a joke about how John looked like a smurf compared to him.

“Alright shorty,” Austin teased, “Let’s go shoot around. You go in and be goalie first, and I’ll be goalie after I make five shots.”

“Okay.” John responded.

Austin scored his five goals on his first five shots. He plays for their varsity team so he is really good. John isn’t very good at goalie, but when he gets the ball in front of the goal he can match Austin’s shooting skills any day.

“Wow,” said Austin in an exciting voice. “You can really shoot.”

“Thanks,” replied John. “To bad my dad won’t let me play. I think I would be a pretty good forward if you ask me.”

“You would definitely be awesome,” agreed Austin. ‘’I can just imagine you getting the ball dribbling past all of the defenders and then you shoot and you score! GOAL!” Austin screamed like an announcer at a professional soccer game.

“Hahahaha,” they both fell down laughing.

After an hour and a half of dribbling, shooting, and passing John looked at his watch and said in an exhausted voice, “It’s 10:00 and my practice doesn’t end until 11:00. Let’s take a break.”

“Okay,” Austin responded while he dragged himself off of the field and on to the bench.

Back at home John’s Dad got a phone call from John’s coach. Coach Ryan told John’s Dad the news about how John has been ditching every football practice on Saturday for no reason.

“Do you know why John has been skipping football practice every Saturday? I would like you to call me before practice to tell me that he is not going to be here.”

“I am sorry Coach Ryan. I had no clue that he was skipping Saturday practice. I’ll tell you what. Next Saturday I am going to follow John when he skips practice to see where he goes. Then, I’ll give you a call and tell you what happened.

“Great plan,” said Coach Ryan in an exited voice.

Just as they hung up John came through the back door.

“Hey Dad.”

“Hi son, how was football practice?” John’s Dad asked pretending not to know that John skipped practice.

“It was great dad. I scored two touchdowns today!” John said trying to sound exited.

He really didn’t like lying to his dad; he just really doesn’t want to make his dad sad by telling him that he had absolutely no love for football at all.

Saturday came again in an instant. John did his normal routine that included getting dressed, eating breakfast, and brushing his teeth. As he yelled bye to his dad he got on his bike, but this time his dad got into his car and trailed John. He stayed about a half of a mile behind John just to be safe. At first John’s dad almost decided to turn around because John was riding his bike the same way to go to football practice, but then instead of making a right to go to the fields he made a left.

“Where the heck is he going?” John’s dad questioned himself acting like there was someone in the passenger seat.

He continued to follow John until he saw him dismount his bike. John’s Dad parked about a block away to make sure John didn’t see him.

Jogging to the parking lot and when he saw John’s bike he heard John talking to someone.

“I brought some friends for a scrimmage with.” said the person talking to John.

“Cool Austin. Can I be on you team?” questioned John.

“Sure,” responded Austin.

“So it is Austin John is meeting up with every Saturday,” John’s Dad muttered to himself.

As all of the boys walked onto the field John’s dad sat by a tree close enough to see the boys, but far enough so they couldn’t see him. Immediately after they started John’s Dad recognized no one except John and Austin. The ball made a lot of weird hops since the fields had lots of ditches in it, and it was hard to see where they were on the field because it wasn’t lined.

John was having a blast, but he had no idea that his Dad was watching him and that he knew that he was skipping football practice every Saturday.

At 11:00 John’s Dad went over to John and said it was time to go. John’s mouth dropped open like he trying to catch a bunch of flies. John was stunned!

John tried to speak but his dad cut him off,” It’s time to go John. Say goodbye to your friends.”

John did as he was told and walked away with his dad. When they reached their car nobody said anything. Nobody was in any mood talk.

“I’m really sorry dad.” John said in a small voice.

“I know,” he responded.

Every time someone made him mad and they tried to apologize, he would always respond I know.

John knew he was in big trouble so he tried one more time, “Dad, I am really sorry.”

“No. I’m sorry.” He responded

“What!” John almost yelled. It made no sense to him.

“Well I know you wanted to play soccer all a long, but I just really wanted you to play football. It seems like it was in your blood, so I made you play. I just really wanted you to keep the family tradition going,” he said as he turned into their driveway.

As they got out John said, “Thanks for not getting mad.”

John went up to his room and talked to Austin and told him in exact details.

“Wow. He seemed as mad as a hungry lion.” Austin said over the phone. “I thought for sure you would be dead.

“I thought I was going to be too,” John agreed.

“I don’t think you should come play soccer with us for a while, but if for some crazy reason he lets you, we will be at the fields at 10:00.” Austin told his friend.

“Are you kidding me?” John said in a sarcastic voice. “My dad is so going to let me play with you guys every Saturday.”

“Hahahaha,” they both laughed and then hung up.

A week later John was ready for football so he went to his bike to go ride it to football, but his dad had other plans. He was just sitting there by his bike almost guarding it like a watch dog.

“You aren’t taking your bike to football today,” said his dad. Get in the car, I’ll drive you.

“Oh boy,” John thought to himself. “This is not good. My own dad doesn’t even trust me.”

John slowly mumbled an okay and slowly walked into the car. He wasn’t paying attention to where they were going. He was just assuming that he would be taken to football practice. He dreaded the moment that he was going to have to get out of the car. He was so lost in thought that he didn’t even realize that his dad drove right past the football field.

When they got out of the car John was shocked to see a soccer field in front of him. It was the best field he had ever seen in his life. It had two goals on bright green artificial grass. There were no holes or dirt anywhere, and it was all completely flat. In the distance John saw a bunch of boys his age in his school’s varsity uniforms.

“Where are we?” John questioned his dad.

“We are at soccer tryouts,” He responded with a grin.